





Ralph C. Link
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Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.

St. Paul's United Church of Christ
Butler, Pennsylvania
Rev. Ralph Link, Pastor January 7, 1990
Mr. Robert Weisenstein, Liturgist
Mr. Dale Rice, Minister of Music
Mr. Roland Thompson, Saxophonist
Acolytes: Mike Kay and Chris Shearer

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.

Prelude
Chiming of the Hour
Announcements
Congregational Greeting
Joys
Prayer Requests
+Processional Hymn No. 7 "Great God, We Sing Your
Mighty Hand"
+Ascription
+Exhortation
+Confession (In Unison) O Thou Who art from everlasting to
everlasting, without beginning or end of days;
replenish us with heavenly grace, at the beginning of
this year, that we may be able to accept all its duties,
to perform all its labors, to welcome all its mercies,
to meet all its trials, and to advance through all it
holds in store for us with cheerful courage and a
constant mind. O Lord, let us not be separated from
Thee, either by joy or sorrow, or by any sin or weak-
ness of our own. Forgive us, and keep us in Thine
eternal love, through Christ our Lord. Amen.
+Kyrie
+Assurance of Pardon
Call to Prayer: Pastor - The Lord be with You
People - And with Thy Spirit
Pastor - Let us pray.
Requiem Observance and Prayer
Mrs. Rosco Gould, Merle S. Harmon, Joseph Hampton,
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Hoffman, William Winters and William
Hockenberry
Friends: Mary DeBroad, Vera Hockenberry, Samuel P.
Christy and Carrie Sanderson *WALTER H. TROTLER*
Hymn No. 614 "For All the Saints"
Children's Moment
Giving of our Tithes and Offerings
Offertory
+Doxology page 382

Piano Anthem: "No Other Name/All Hail the Power of Jesus
Name"

Scripture: James 1: 21-25
Sermon: "Does It Work?"
+Invitational Hymn No. 370 "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"
+Choral Benediction "Shalom to You"
+Benediction
+Postlude

***** +Congregation Standing *****
The beautiful flowers on the altar have been placed by Mr.
and Mrs. Leroy Andrew Jr. and Family in memory of
Leroy Andrews Sr.
Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Tait will greet our members and guests
at the door this morning.
Ushers for today are Marty Henry, Walter Hollefreund,
John Snow and Jeff Snyder.
Attendance last Sunday was 85 with 6 visitors.
Nursery will be provided today by Mrs. Linda Patsy.
Van Driver for next Sunday will be Dick Mangel.
The Hospital Visitation Team for this week will be Bill
Snyder and Dick Mangel.

UPCOMING MEETINGS: -Tuesday Jan. 9th - Sunday School
teachers meeting at 7 P.M. Please come!
-Monday Jan. 8th - Property Committee
meeting at 7 P.M.
-Audit begins at 2 P.M. See office for
your scheduled time. January 17th!!!
-Jan. 18th Music Committee will meet
following choir practice at 8:30 P.M.

> YEARBOOK INFORMATION is due in now. All committee chair-
men must report who the new chairman is for 1990.
> NOMINATIONS for Elders and Deacons will be made this month.
Please put down your nomination on a slip of paper and
drop in the offering plate. Paper is found in back of
the pews.
At the Choral Benediction we would like the congregation to
join us. The words are: Shalom to you now, Shalom my
friends, May God's full mercies bless you, my friends,
In all your living and through your loving, Christ be
your shalom, Christ be your shalom.
At the close of the service the invitation is extended to
each worshipper to respond to God's leading for your
life. This invitation gives the opportunity to accept
Christ, to pray, to meditate, or to seek counseling.
The Altar is open to everyone, The Pastor will assist
you if you desire.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH - SAGAMORE, PA. - JANUARY 5, 1997

PRELUDE

GREETINGS/JOYS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRAYER REQUESTS

BOWLING TODAY MOHAWK LANES INDIANA
5:00 - NEED RIDE? ASK BRIAN
ALL WELCOME

SIGN UP SHEET REFR. DOWNTOWN
NEXT WK OK - FOLLOWING WKS:

*HYMN

PRAYER/OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

DISMISSAL OF JUNIOR CHURCH - K TO 11yrs

PASTORAL PRAYER

HYMN

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:21-25

SERMON: "DOES IT WORK?"

ST. PAUL'S, BUTLER - 1/7.90

HYMN

*BENEDICTION

*POSTLUDE

UPSPORN - PEG

SCRIP: JAMES 1:21-25; SERM: "DOES IT WORK?"

(ILUS MAN MAKE A "THIG-A-MA-JIG")

SUMONE SED CH IS LIK THIS - DORS OPN, WINDOWS OPN, ETC

BUT WAT IS IT? DUZ IT WORK? ANSR LYS IN WAT CH IS?????

CH IS LIV ORGNISM MADE OF OTHR LIV ORGANISMS WH/KEEP IT GO
/OUT LIV ORGNISMS-PEOPL, TH/CH IS JUS BLDG, EDIFACE
PEOPL IS WAT MAKES CH & CH IS DEPEN ON PEO WORK/B ACTIV
THIS WAT JAMES SPK IN THIS SCRIP

HE TALK 2EA INDIVID XPIAN & HIS CAL 2LIF HOLINES & SERVIC
VS 21=FILTHNES=FILTH/DIRT, THAT WH/SOIL CLOTHES/BODY
PUT ASID=STRIP OFF LIK DIRTY CLOTHES

FILTHNES/WICKDNES=ROOT MEANING - WAX IN TH/EAR

"STRIP OFF THAT WH/WUD MAK US DEAF TO HEAR

WHY? =VS 21B

ENGRAFT WORD=BIBL-MANNR OF LIV LIF, PLANT W/IN AS SEED

G IMPLANT W/H. SP., HUNGR/THIRST FOR G'S WORD

HUMNNES DENY/DELAY THIS & PUT OFF WKS, DAYS, MNTHS, EVN YRS
JAMES SAYS=STRIP OFF FILTH OF WORL, & RECEIV ENGRAFTD WORD

DUZ IT WORK??? HOW WUD U ANSER???

IT DEPENDS ON U & UR CHURCH & WAT CH IS TO U

(ILUS PASTOR, CHURCH SIGN & REVERS POINT TO CEMTARY)

MANY CH'S R DED? R U DED TO UR CH? OR IS TH/CH DED TO U???

IT IS ONLY AS ALIV AS U R WIL TO MAK IT

VSS 22-24=WHY JAMES SAY MAN??

SUMONE SED IF UBD WOMAN SAM SNALOGY WUDNT HOLD TRU
MAN LKS & C'S SELF, AS IS: MITE NOTIC ONE EAR BIGGR, NOSE TOO BIG,
MOLE ON CHIN, WART ON NOSE, ETC

NO USE WOMAN BCUZ WUD COVR W/MAKUP DO SUMTH BOUT IT,

BUT MAN ACPT AS IS, GOES AWAY & 4GETS WAT LKS LIK, (AVG MAN)

CONTRAST THIS TO - VS 25=READ

SONTRAST=LOOKETH-PEER INTENTLY AT - STOOP OVR & EXAMIN

MAN WHO SEEK WORK AT FAITH ISNT CONTENT JUS LK & C LIK MIRROR,
& 4GET, MUS LK CLOSLY

WAT HE LK AT??? -- PERF LAW OF LIBRTY & WAT IS THIS????

ROMANS 8:2=

ROMANS 8:2

~~thixixxpaulisxxxxxxxxx~~

THIS IS PAUL'S ANSR TO "WAT IS TH/PERF LAW," OR, "TH/LAW OF LIB"
TH/PERF LAW IS CHRIST

WE WAS TH/PERF HUMN BEING G WANTD HIS CREATIN OF MAN 2B
S WAS ABL 2LIV UP TO & FULFIL EVRY REQUIR G HAD 4MAN
AND IT IS ONLY THRU TH/SHED BLUD OF JS XP MAN CANB SET FREE FROM
TH/BONDAG OF SIN & TH/SPIRITUL DETH OR SEPRATIN FR/GOD THAT SIN
BRINGS WITH IT

SO THRU JS XP THER IS TH/NEW LAW, TH/LAW OF LIBRTY, FREEDOM
FR/SIN & ITS CONSEQUENCES

IS THAT A PART OF OUR LIVS AS WE LIV EA DAY??? IT SHUDB
R WE AWAR THAT THRU JS XP WE R NU CREATINS & WE HAV BIN SET
FREE??? WE SHUDB

(ILUS 5YR OLD BOY PROCLAIMING PEOPLE WER FERGIVN)

EVN THO HIS MOTHR WAS EMBARASD HE HAD IT RITE

HE WAS STAING A TRUTH

IT IS IN XP'S NAM ALL MANK IS FERGIVN

BUT NOT EVRONE AWAR OF THAT OR EVN CARES TO KNO IT
BUT LIK THAT CHILD - THERE - OUT THERIS WHER TH/MESAG NEEDS 2B
GIVN

DUZ TH/CHURCH WORK??? ONLY IF ITS INDIVIDUL MEMBRS WORK AT
SHARING THER FAITH

(ILUS OF YNG MAN & ALL AUDIENC CLAPPD EXCEP ONE MAN)

IS G ABL 2APLAUD WAT WE R DO IN TH/CHURCH?

WHOM R WE SEEKING TO PLEAS?

TH/DORS & WINDOWS OPN & CLOS:

YES GO OFF & ON, BELLS RING & THIS CONG IS IN MOTIN

BUT DUZ IT WORK???

WAT IS IT??? HOW DO WE ANSR???

R WE WILING TO CHANG OUR INACTIVTY IF WE R GILTY OF THAT???

GOD INVITES US NOT JUS 2B HEARERS OF TH/WORD, BUT DOERS ALSO

(Ilus THINGAMAJIG)
exempl of Ch

vs 21=
filthines=~~strip off~~SOIL CLOTHES/BODIES
put off=STRIP OFF LIK CLOTHES
THINES?WICKDNES+MEDSENSE+WAX IN TH/EAR
IMPLANT=PLACE IN LIK SEED

(Ilus Ch/sign & pt othr way 2 cemtary)- Wher is Ur Ch?

vss 22-24

Contrast vs 25

Rom 8:2-Perf Law

(Ilus 5yr old boy suprmakrt-In Xp's Nam U R 4Givn)

(Ilus yng man violin, evrone aplaud cept one old man)

man who seek work at faith no conten jus 2C mere imag in mirror
quikly 4gottn

NO, mus lk closly at it

Th/Perf Law;Th/Law of Librty -Wat is perf law,law of librty?

Rom 8:2=Th/perf Law is Js Xp

He perf humn B G wantd 4His creatin of man 2B

was abl 2liv up2 fulfilling evry requir G had 4man
& it only thru shed blud Js Xp man canB set free fr/bondag sin &
sp/deth,sepratn fr/G that sin brings w/it

so thru Js Xp ther is Nu law=th/Law of librty,fredum fr/sin &
its consequences

is that a part our livs as liv them ea day?

R we awar thru Js Xp we R nu creatins,that we bin set free?
(Ilus 5yr old boy & suprmkt=In Xp's Name U R 4givn)
evn tho mothr embars,boy had it rite

he was stat truth

it is in Xp's Name all mank is 4givn,but not evrone is awar of
that or evn cares 2kno it

but lik that child,ther,out ther is wher th/mesag needs 2B giv

& it only thru membs Ch Js Xp mesag wil B givn

Duz The Church Work?

only if its individ membs work 2shar ther faith

(Ilus yng man play violin & evrone clap cept one old man)

Is G abl 2aplaud wat we R do in th/Ch?

Whom R we seek 2pleas?

th/dors opn/clos;windows opn/clos;lites go on/off;bells ring &
th/cong is in motion

But Duz It Work?

Wat is it?

How do we ansr?

R we wil 2chnng our inactivty if we gilty of that?

invits us not 2B jus hearers of th/Word,but doers also

"Does It Work?"

Scripture: James 1:21-25

(Ilus man mak "Thingamajig")

Suml has sed th/Ch is lik this:dors/windos opn/shut/bels R rung,
lites go on/off=but wat is it? Duz it work?

ansr lys in wt th/Ch is=2defin simply is 2say it liv orgnism
madup othr liv orgnisms 2keep it go

ut othr liv orgnisms-peo,Ch is jus word,bldg,edific

Peo is wat maks th/Ch & th/Ch is depend on thoz peo work & B
activ

this precisly wat James talk bout this Scrip

he talk 2ea individ Xpian & his cal is 2lif hilines & servic
vs 21=intrest 2note word 4-Filthines/wickdnes means filth/dirt
wh/soils clothes/bodyys

word usd 4=put asid=strip off lik clothing

so he say=STRIP OFF THAT WH/SOLIS CLOTHS OR BODYYS

But word 4=Filthines/wickdnes has root mean wh/usd medicl sense
& that medicl sens means wax in the ear

So seem James say=BLIEVRS SHUD STRIP OFF,OR AWAY FR/SELVS ANYTH
WH/WIL STOP OR MAK DEF THER HEARING

& wat is reasn 4this? So=IN HUMILTY RECEIV WORD IMPLANTD=21B
Word Implantd=G's Word,Th/Bible,wh/has w/in mesag salv & mannr of
liv Xpian lif

Implant=means 2plac w/in,plant lik seed

G's Word implant us by H Sp

we no born w/naturl desir read/diges G's Word

that hungr/thirst afr things of G implan w/in by H Sp spk 2
our harts & livs

it wen cum 2knowledg salv thru Js Xp,receiv Him as L & Sav that
Bgin hav hungr/thirst 4 G's Word

our human nes may mak us deny this & may delay & put off serch
of G's Word 4days/wks/perhaps yrs

th why James say we 2strip off filth this worl & receiv impl
Word

2 th/quest=Duz It Work?, how sud U ansr?

it very much depen wher Ur ch is

(Ilus pastr,ch/sign,& sign point othr directin)

Wher is Ur ch? Is it ded? Or is it aliv? It is only as aliv as U
R wil 2mak it

Vss 22-24-notic-James say-MAN,do U kno why man not woman?

sumone sed if wrto woman analgy wudnt hol tru

(Exempl-man lk,C warts;moles;unevn ears,lrg nose,etc)

he 4get & walk way-if womn,wud seek 2corec,covrup,but avg man
lk & quikly 4get

Contrast this=vs 25

th/contras this=in ordr 4man 2B wat shudB,peers intently
intently=actuly stoop ovr 2C very closly wat lk at

"Does It Work?"

Scripture: James 1:21-25

(Illustration of man makin a "thingamajig")

There is a story told of a man who worked in a plant in machine repair. His job was to fix the wheels and gears and wiring to keep the machines running. He thus had a vast knowledge of this type of thing and he liked to do that. So he was always bringing home scrapped wheels and gears and things. His next door neighbor noticed him bringing these things home and asked about it. The man replied, "I'm going to make something special with them. Time went on and the neighbor noticed the man working in his basement. After some time the man met his neighbor in the yard and asked him to come into the basement because he wanted to show him what he had made. He explained that he had taken a spare room of the basement and he had ~~xxxx~~ finished this project. He ushered the neighbor in the door and asked, "Well, what do you think of it?" The man looked at all of the gears, and wheels, and cogs, and lights and asked, "Does It Work?" "Does It Work," shouted the man, of course it works. Watch!" And with that he threw a few switches and the whole room came to life. Wheels were turning, and gears were shifting, bells were ringing, lights were going off and on, little windows and doors he had made were opening and closing. The nieghbor looked at it for a time and then asked, "What is it?"

Someone has said that the church is much like this. Doors and windows are opened and closed, bells are rung, lights go off an on, "But what is it?" "Does IT Work?" The answer lies in what the church is. To define it simply is to say that it is living organism made up of many other living organisma which keep it going. With out the other living organisma, people, church is just a word, or a building, an edifice. People, is what makes the church. And the church is dependent upon those people working and being active. That is precisely what James is talking about in this Scripture for this morning.

He is talking to ~~xxx~~ each individual Christian and his call is to a life of holiness and service. In the 21st verse he says, "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

It is interesting to note that the word James uses for "Filthiness" means "filth, or dirt, which soils clothes or soils the body." And the word he uses for "putting aside," means to strip off like clothing. So he is saying, "Strip off that which soils your clothes or bodies. But the word which is used for "filthiness and wickedness" has a root meaning which is used in a medical sense. That sense means wax in the ear. So it seems that James is saying that believers should strip off, or away from themselves anything which will stop us, or make deaf their hearing. And what is the reason for this? So that, "In humility receive the Word implanted, which is able to save your souls."

The Word impanted is God's Word, the Bible, which has within it the message of salvation and the manner of living the Christian life. The word used for "implanted" is a word that means to plant within such as a seed. God's Word is implanted within us by His Holy Spirit. We are not born with a natural desire to read and digest God's Word. That hunger and thirsting after the things of God is planted within by the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts and lives. It is when we come to the knowledge of salvation through Christ, receive Him as Lord and Savior that we begin to have a hunger and thirst for God's Word. But our humanness may make us deny this and we may delay and put off the searching of God's Word for days, weeks, and perhaps years. That is why James says that we are to strip off the filth of this world and "Receive" the implanted Word." To the question, "Does It Work?" how would you answer? It very much

depends on where your church is.

(Illustration of pastor, church sign, and sign pointing in another direction)

A minister tells of when he was young in the ministry and after getting a small congregation started, he put a nice sign on the main road ~~leading~~ one block from the church. It had an arrow pointing toward the church with the name and the invitation to attend. After a few weeks went by he decided to check on the sign and said that he was humiliated to discover that someone had pulled the sign up, turned it around and the arrow pointed to a cemetery across the road.

Where is your church? Is it dead? Or is it alive? It is only as alive as you are willing to make it.

the

James tells us the solution for making a church work is simply, "But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was," verses 22-24.

Notice James says "A man." Do you know why he uses a man as the example? Someone has said that if he wrote "A woman," the analogy wouldn't hold true. James is using the illustration of a man looking in a mirror. He sees himself as he is. He notices that maybe one ear is bigger than the other, or it is not the same ~~place~~ place on the side of his head; or, his nose may be rather large; or, he may have a wart on his chin; or one eyebrow is different than the other and so on. James uses "a man" because that someone who said if he used a woman the woman would seek to correct or cover up the mole, or wart, or whatever. But the average man will accept his face for what it is and walk away from the mirror and quickly forget that he has warts, or moles, or freckles, or whatever.

Contrast this to, "The one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer, this man shall be pleased in what he does," verse 25.

The contrast is this: in order for that same man to be what he should be, he has to peer intently at what he is looking at. The word "intently" means to actually stoop over to see very closely what you are looking at. The man who is seeking to work at his faith, isn't content to just see it as a mere image in a mirror quickly forgotten. No, he must look closely at it. And what is he looking closely at? "The perfect law," ~~is what James calls it.~~ "The law of liberty," is what James calls it. What is the perfect law? Or, the law of liberty? Paul answers that by saying in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."

The Perfect law is Jesus Christ. He was the perfect human being that God wanted His creation of man to be. Jesus was able to live up to fulfill every requirement that God had for man. And it is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ that man can be set free from the bondage of sin, and the spiritual death, separation from God that sins brings with it. So through Jesus Christ there is the new law, the law of liberty, freedom from sin and its consequences. Is that a part of our lives as we live them each day? Are we aware that through Jesus Christ we are new creations, that we have been set free?

(Illustration of 5 year-old-boy proclaiming that people were forgiven)

A member of a church which uses a prayer of confession and an assurance of pardon tells that after the confession the minister announces, "In Christ's name, you are forgiven," and the congregation repeats, "In Christ's name, you are forgiven." This member tells of going

shopping in a super market with her 5 year-old-son. She was embarrassed because he was going from shopper to shopper proclaiming, "In Christ's name, you are forgiven."

Even though his mother was embarrassed, the little boy had it right. He was stating a truth. It is in Christ's name that all mankind is forgiven. But not everyone is aware of that or even cares to know it. But like that child, there, out there is where the message needs to be given. "Does the church work?" Only if its individual members work sharing their faith.

*** (Illustration of young man playing violin and everyone clapped, but one old man)

Many years ago a young couple had their first child, a boy. As the boy began to grow they noticed he had musical talent. He could play the violin. They wanted the best teacher they could get and were told there was an old Swiss maestro who used to teach but was now retired. When the maestro heard the boy play he recognized he had ability and decided to teach him. The boy was just eight-years-old at that time. For ten years his teacher worked with him almost every day. Then came the time for his debut. His parents booked Carnegie Hall. The press and all the important people came. The lights dimmed and the young man ~~xxx~~ stepped on that stage and from the first note to the last he held the crowd mesmerized. When he finished the crowd rose to their feet and filled the hall with their cheers and applause. Yet the boy ran offstage crying. The stage manager yelled, "Get back out there. They love you. They are all cheering and applauding." The boy answered, "There is one who is not." The stage manager rushed out to look and then came back. He said, "OK, so one old man is not applauding. You can't worry about what one old man thinks when the rest of the world loves you." The boy replied, "But you don't understand. That old man is my teacher, my leader."

Is God able to applaud what we are doing within the church? Whom are we seeking to please? The doors and windows open and close; lights go off and on; bells ring, and this congregation is in motion. But "Does it Work?" "What is it?" How do we answer? Are we willing to change our inactivity if we are guilty of that? God invites us not just to be hearers of the Word, but doers also.

*** (ALTERNATIVE ENDING WITH ILLUSTRATION OF MISSIONARY WHO HAD SERVED FOR OVER 40 YEARS IN AFRICA AND HIS RETURN HOME)



